



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

September 2016 Newsletter



New Fork Browns

Pinedale Fish Biologist Pete Cavalli, Fish Technicians Cynthia Nau and Colter Brown conducted an electrofishing sample in order to calculate a population estimate for trout in the New Fork River near the Pinedale airport. Results showed brown trout up to 23 inches continue to be plentiful in this reach. A number of rainbow trout were also captured, but their numbers were too low to produce reliable population estimates. Mountain whitefish were found to be common in the deep pools, but no effort was made to collect them, since a population estimate had been calculated for that species in recent years.





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Keeping Tabs on Pronghorn

Every August, regional wildlife biologists and game wardens take to the field to count and classify pronghorn antelope. The Sublette Antelope Herd Unit is huge, bordered by the Wyoming Range on the west and the Wind River Range on the east. It is also bordered by Interstate 80 on the south and stretches all the way to the Gros Ventre drainage on the north end.

In the northern portion of the herd, which includes the Pinedale Region and part of the Jackson Region, the recent survey resulted in the highest yearling buck ratio at 24 per 100 does, which also resulted in the highest total buck ratio at 67 per 100 does during the past 10 years. However, wildlife managers also recorded one of the lower fawn ratios over that time period at 59 per 100 does, the lowest number of fawns was 54 per 100 does in 2009 and the highest was 72 per 100 does in 2012.



Poached Pronghorn

Big Piney Game warden Adam Hymas worked on a case involving a buck antelope that was shot and left north of Big Piney. Anyone with information about the illegal shooting should contact Adam or the stop poaching hotline at 1-877-WGFD-TIP or 1-800-943-3847.





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New Fork Lake Kokanee

Statewide fish spawning personnel Pete Feck and Jake Brown were joined by Dustin Cram from the Auburn Hatchery for the annual New Fork Lake Kokanee Spawn. The run was somewhat depressed for the third straight year, but crews were able to get three good takes and 305,000 green eggs went into the Daniel incubator. Eggs will be hatched and fish will be reared for stocking at New Fork lake, Flaming Gorge and Green River Lake. While overall numbers of fish have been somewhat depressed, the individual fish were noticeably larger than in the past.





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Fall Fishing Forecast

Fall fishing in the Pinedale area can be exceptionally rewarding, whether fishing a stream or a lake. Stream fishing will primarily result in catching brown or rainbow trout in the Green or New Fork rivers. As water temperatures cool down, hatches dwindle, but midges and small mayflies (Blue winged olive's and Trico's) hatches can be prolific. Trout will be found in slower water areas than you would find them during summer when the water is warmer, and will become active later in the day as fall progresses. "Patterns imitating these bugs should be small (18-22) and include zebra midges, parachute Adams, and Griffith's gnats. Hopper and dropper setups with a Chernobyl and small nymph can also be effective. Streamers on a sinking tip may also fool some of the larger fish," recommends Hilda Sexauer, Pinedale regional fisheries supervisor. "For spin casters, small Rapalas and spinners are a sure bet in catching a trout."



Lake trout fishing turns back on in the fall in the Finger Lakes-try Fremont, Halfmoon, and New Fork. Lake trout will move into the shallows starting in October, especially on overcast days. Rapalas, spoons, or ¼-½ ounce jigs with tube or mister twister bodies are a good bet. Boat anglers should concentrate on points and bars, with fish often suspending at mid-depth during the day. "Vertical jigging for lake trout marked on your fish finder can provide fast and furious action or frustration... it is fishing not catching after all!" said Sexauer. A small piece of sucker meat on the end usually can help in enticing lake trout to bite, but remember, live bait is illegal in the Pinedale Area (Region 4). For those without a boat, casting the same lures from shore can often be productive in the fall for lake trout, possibly a memorable sized lake trout.

In early fall, fish become more active in both streams and lakes as water temperatures cool from summertime highs. However, during late fall, water temperatures can cool enough that fish will become more lethargic. Slow down your presentation and try multiple colors, weights and styles of lures/flies until you find what the fish are keen to bite. Whatever your method, fishing amongst the autumn colors is a fine way to spend a fall day in the upper Green River valley.





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Colorado Cutts for LaBarge Creek

Members of the Pinedale Fish Management crew and the Daniel Hatchery continued the restoration effort on LaBarge Creek with the stocking of Colorado River cutthroat trout in August, some being stocked by backpack. Several tributaries were also electrofished and cutthroat trout were found in most of the streams from previous stocking efforts.

University of Wyoming graduate student Alex LeCheminant, PIT tagged several of the Colorado River cutthroats to track movement and survival of stocked fish in the LaBarge Creek drainage.

Pinedale fish technicians also collected macroinvertebrate samples from LaBarge, Crystal, South LaBarge and Spring creeks.



On the Ground

The Habitat & Access crew got started on a habitat enhancement project on private lands in the northern Wyoming Range that will benefit mule deer and other wildlife. The project involves the thinning and mowing of old decadent sagebrush to promote the growth of young sagebrush plants, antelope bitterbrush and other plants in the understory.





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Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*)

By: Troy Fieseler



Properly functioning aspen communities are diverse in terms of the number of forbs, grasses, and shrubs found within, especially when compared to coniferous forests. This rich diversity provides important forage and cover for mule deer throughout the summer months and into early fall. In addition, aspen stands play an important role in fawn rearing, providing lactating does optimal forage to counter the high energy demands associated with raising young. Furthermore, aspen itself is a highly sought after food item and has been identified through research in Wyoming as the fourth most important forage species for mule deer.

Aspens can reproduce from seed, however, their ability to regenerate by shoots or “suckers” along the lateral root system is truly unique.

In this way, many genetically identical trees are created forming what are known as clones. All trees within a clone share the same root structure and can be distinguished from other clones by various traits such as timing of leaf flushing, sex, branching habits, and autumn leaf color. The ability to regenerate from roots allows aspen stands to persist through time, with some clones living for thousands of years. However, many aspens throughout Wyoming and the Intermountain West are threatened and deteriorating due to the contributing factors of fire suppression, excessive browsing, and conifer and sagebrush encroachment.

Pros:

- Important forage for mule deer and other wildlife
- Diversity of forbs, shrubs and grasses in aspen stands
- Enhances the ability of watersheds to store water
- Ability to re-sprout after disturbance

Cons:

- Susceptible to diseases and insect pests

In order to maintain vigorous and productive aspen communities, disturbance is often reintroduced into the system. Numerous methods are used to accomplish this including prescribed fire, conifer removal, mechanical thinning of mature aspen trees, and ripping of aspen roots. The cutting of live aspens and root ripping are both methods used to take advantage of aspen’s natural instinct to deploy resources to new growth upon disturbance, while conifer removal is performed to reduce competition and open up additional resources (e.g. water & sunlight). Fire is a natural feature in aspen ecosystems and is perhaps the best method to maintain and restore proper aspen communities.

Fire reduces the overstory thus increasing sunlight to the forest floor, stimulates the growth of new suckers, and also removes conifers that compete with aspen for resources. Post fire, aspens can quickly dominate burned areas due to their ability to re-sprout with as many as 50,000 suckers sprouting per acre. This flush of nutritious growth provides the food resources mule deer will need to survive the upcoming harsh Wyoming winter. The WGFD actively carries out treatments to enhance aspen communities both on public and private lands. If you are interested in the opportunity to improve aspens on your property, please contact your local WGFD office to discuss options.



Prescribed fire to promote aspen regeneration.